

Armenian Proverbs and the Biblical Scripture

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Abstract

The article examines different types of parallels between Armenian folk sayings and proverbs and the Bible, classifies the types of parallels and the main trends of divergence in cultural, religious, ideological, and linguistic-metaphorical aspects and attempts to explain the possible roots and origins for the observed parallelism.

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Introduction

Numerous biblical idioms and proverbs¹ circulate in communication through many languages, including Armenian and English. Does that mean that the Christian ideology dominates over the Armenian proverbs? In his article *Christian and Non-Christian*, Matti Kuusi states that notwithstanding the centuries long monopoly on education, the Christian ideology does not dominate over the Finnish proverbs. At a broad glance, this is true also about the Armenian proverbs, and even more generally, about the folk sayings of Christian nations.

Since the separation of proto-Armenians from Indo-European community around the fifth millennium BC, the Armenian language and culture passed a long way until the domination of Christianity for the last sixteen hundred years. My research below shows that the ancient ideological layers of the pre-Christian era govern the general ideology of the system of the Armenian proverbs, regardless of a formal parallelism with many Biblical passages on the surface, particularly with the Old Testament.

Proverbs are folk sayings common in use and pithy in sense and structure; they contain a special conclusion or recommendation in regard to almost every life situation. If language is frozen

¹ Also proverbs: *The apple doesn't fall far from its tree. Give him an inch, he'll ask for a mile. Eye for eye. As you sow so shall you reap. The love of money is the root of evil. Many are called but few are chosen. The wages of sin is death. The writing is on the wall. The truth shall set you free.* Etc.

culture, as it is often referred, proverbs are the fossilized slivers of ancient glaciers, characterized with a conventional meaning with an arbitrary relation toward its literal meaning. For years I have been conducting a research on Armenian proverbs with an emphasis on proverb interpretation by heritage Armenian students because the language of proverbs is quite challenging unless one is directly exposed to them through everyday meaningful discourse as opposed to classroom tasks, quizzes, or homework. One of the interesting outcomes of this study is the revelation of these multiple parallels between the Armenian proverbs and the Biblical script as they are readily perceived and interpreted by students. Parallels are instances of direct or indirect similarity between a folk saying and a passage in the Bible expressed through a similarity of basic images, conventional metaphors, formulaic expressions, and the ideological background including conclusions and recommendations. This paper pertains to the study of these parallels and their classification and analysis in order to reveal the common and opposite mentality traits between the system of Armenian proverbs and the Christian ideology, and with an attempt to find the source of origination. My initial proposition infers that parallels do not necessarily indicate that a given Armenian folk saying originates from the Bible or is influenced by it. The commonalities may result from having yet older common sources or from common human values and beliefs, underlying proverb mentality. A basic reservation must be made in regard to common and opposite mentality traits: neither the biblical ideology is homogenous, nor the mentality in the Armenian proverbs. First of all, there is a considerable discrepancy between the Old and New Testament teachings.

The Sermon on the Mount and the old folk proverbs (Finnish G.H.) move on completely different levels, and the directions they give often collide abruptly. The basic command of the Sermon on the Mount, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you' does not seem to have left the slightest trace in the Finnish proverbs. The teaching that one should not resist evil or that should take no thought for the morrow or that to enter the kingdom of heaven one must become like little children is almost unimaginably distant from the proverbial wisdom dictated by the steadfast common sense of the peasant.

The ethic of the Old Testament, the commandments and prohibitions of the tablets of Moses, are far closer to the spirit of the ancient folk. Matti Kuusi.1994.

Like in the Finnish proverbs, the *eye for eye* mentality of the Old Testament finds far more parallels in the Armenian proverbs than the 'love thine enemy' teaching of the New Testament. The closest that the Armenian paremia approach to the concept of *loving thine enemy* is the following: Դուշմանիս չեմ կամենայ: *May it not happen even to my enemy*; which refers to *not* wishing anyone to suffer as one does/did. This idiomatic expression has an air of exaggeration about it to describe the totally intolerable nature of one's sufferings and from that experience, it extends sympathy to everyone who may suffer like that. Its humanistic implications derive from sharing the wisdom or lessons of suffering and not from unconditional love to all, including enemies. A variation of this common phrase, Դուշմանիդ (թող) լինի² *May it happen to your enemy*, eliminates the New Testament as its ideological source. The latter is used, often with irony, to diminish or alleviate the effect of the interlocutor's grave thoughts.³ Idiomatic expressions such as Դուշմանիս չեմ կամենայ are further referred to as *lexical matches*.

Quotes from the Biblical scripture (further referred to as *Bible*) are from RSV, *New Revised Standard Version* (3rd Edition. 1989) unless specified as KJV, *King James Version*, which often more closely parallels the Armenian proverbs and to the fifth century translation of the Bible into

² The existential verb rarely has this standard form of Eastern Armenian (լինի), as a rule, its diverse colloquial forms are employed in communication.

³ An example of its use may be: 'What if I got cancer, I am having this and that symptoms.' The listener might answer, 'Why, may it happen to your enemy'.

Armenian. The Armenian proverbs are further referred to as proverb(s) unless specified otherwise, such as an English or Persian proverb, etc.)

Types of Parallels

For a clear differentiation of the types of parallels, we compare a proverb with a corresponding Biblical passage. This separation is artificial because the parallels between the Bible and Armenian proverbs are multifaceted and they create an integral system of semantically interwoven sayings through common images and ideas (see below, in *Proverb Tapestry*).

Parallels divide into two general types: direct and indirect. The direct parallels contain basic Christian images and biblical formulaic expressions. Indirect parallels match the Bible with the general idea. The direct parallels form several categories according to the degree of equivalency in lexico-grammatical and figurative form and meaning.

Direct Parallels:

1. Complete Equivalency: practically the same form and meaning.
 2. Equivalency in Meaning: practically the same meaning; insignificant differences in form.
 3. Equivalency in Form: practically the same form, quite different meaning.
 4. Lexical Matches: practically the same form and meaning condensed into a word or phrase.
 5. Thematic Adages: a biblical theme condensed into a proverb.
 6. Opposite Mentality: biblical topics and forms, opposing ideas.
7. All indirect parallels are ideological adages in two subcategories:
- 7.1 Nested Ideological Adages: biblical ideas in a different form with synonyms as direct parallels.
 - 7.2 Free Ideological Adages: biblical ideas in a different form, no synonyms as direct parallels.

Proverb Tapestry

This classification of parallel types is based on a one to one juxtaposition between an Armenian proverb and a passage from the Bible. In the big picture, each correspondence is complemented with related proverbs on one hand, and on the other, other passages from the Bible. Thus, proverbs and their biblical parallels interweave into a complex tapestry of diverge semantic relations.

Armenian proverbs as a whole constitute a semantic system of units intricately joined through diverse semantic relations. Paremiological units are complete and independent lexical-semantic entities inasmuch that their conventional meaning does not derive from their constituents. In this sense, proverbs have synonyms and antonyms (cf.: Permiakov: 1979). As units of a semantic field, proverbs relate to each other as unmarked hypernyms surrounded with marked synonyms and antonyms, etc. through related or unrelated images and through the expression of a similar conclusion with different means or an adverse conclusion with the same images. In this ever expanding tapestry, each proverb with its biblical parallel connects with more and more synonyms and antonyms by a change in images, themes and topics, and by a variation of the proverbial conclusions and instructions which may derive from similar images and similar or different topics. These similarities and differences mount like waves creating an amazingly continuous tapestry where practically any proverb can become the center of semantic expansion.

This systematic tapestry of interwoven images and ideas is evident also in the subsystem of proverbs paralleling with the Bible: The same proverb may associate with several biblical passages through all the seven types of parallels differentiated above and vice versa, a biblical passage may correlate with several Armenian proverbs in different degrees of equivalency.

To demonstrate this systematic interweaving, let us compare some proverbs which can be viewed as extensions of ‘doing good without expectations of immediate reward.’ the first three proverbs below parallel with *casting bread upon waters* which continues the discussion on the ‘spirit of the Old Testament and folklore.’

Ecc1 11:1 Send out your bread upon waters, for after many days you will get it back.

Լաւութիւն արա, ջուրը ձգիր, դէմդ կ'ելնի:

Do goodness and throw it into the water; it will appear in front of you.

This is almost a complete match with the Bible, referred further in this article as complete equivalency. It is the main proverb in this topic, the so-called hypernym and lemma. It is the least marked member of the semantic field, retains the highest frequency of use and continuity between different communities of Armenian speakers. It appears in several semantic variations⁴.

Լաւութիւն արա, ջուրը գցի, ձուկը չիմանայ, Աստուած կ'իմանայ:

Do goodness and cast onto the waters; if fish don't know, God will.

This rather close synonym to the lemma is marked with a new image (fish) and confirms the acknowledgement by God.

Unlike the Bible, and as Matti Kuusi states in regard to Finnish proverbs in general, the Armenian proverb does not promise a reward or return, only possible acknowledgement (note that the verb կ'իմանայ *know* is in conditional mood). Direct parallels of this type with a quite similar wording and meaning are the *equivalents in meaning* (type 2).

Note that the proverbs expanding on the theme of ‘casting bread upon waters’ demonstrate the integral characteristics of proverbs and paremia in general. Paremiological units are complete and independent lexical-semantic entities inasmuch that their conventional meaning does not derive from their constituents. In this sense, proverbs have synonyms, and antonyms (Permiakov: 1979). For example, the main proverb in this topic, the so-called lemma is: Լաւութիւն արա, ջուրը ձգիր, դէմդ կ'ելնի. It retains the highest frequency of use and continuity between different Armenian speaking communities. It appears in several semantic variations (I have excluded the historical and geographical variations, which result from historical changes of the Armenian language in time and space). The proverb Լաւութիւն արա, ջուրը գցի, ձուկը չիմանայ, Աստուած կ'իմանայ: presented above is a synonym to the main (the lemma). In that acknowledgement by God assumes a reward, it is a rather close synonym to the lemma.

The synonymy is stretched to an almost opposite meaning in the following variation:

Լաւութիւն արա, ջուրը գցի, Աստուած չիմանայ, ձուկը կ'իմանայ:

Do goodness and cast onto the waters; if God doesn't know, fish will.

This proverb brings in a new shade: irony toward the assumption of heavenly reward or justice and, at the same time, a profound respect toward any living being (fish) and a down to earth belief that goodness shall be appreciated by someone *equivalents in form* (type 3).

A clear antonym to all three proverbs above is the following: one may suffer because of his/her good deeds:

Լաւութիւն էնողի թափէն ծակ է:

He who does good things, has a hole in his head. Cf. English: No good deed will go unpunished.

Parallels of this type which express opposite to the Bible ideas but have identifiable similarity in the wording constitute direct parallels of *opposite mentality* (type 6). The reward for doing goodness here is reversed into the doer's fault. This proverb opposes to the other three in the semantic field on doing goodness and relates to another chain of synonyms with related and unrelated images expanding into newer shades and hues and developing the theme of ungratefulness. The last proverb

⁴ I have excluded the historical and geographical variations, which result from the natural variation of Armenian in time and space.

has many synonyms especially from the other end of the relationship of giving and receiving help: a good number of proverbs state the ingratitude of the needy or of those who do not appreciate the help received. The following continues the theme of although with sarcasm.

Աղքատ շինէ խէր էրա, ետէն դառի, սէյր էրա:

Bump a poor, do goodness, then turn and watch after him.

It is still synonymous to Լաւութիւն էնողի թափէն ծակ է but quite departs from our starting point at Eccl 11:1.

Interestingly, no proverb or other paremia associates with Good Samaritan. On the contrary, ingratitude appears in many variations.

Եստի՛ն գոկդ, փիտե՛ն միրուքդ:

I sit in you lap, I pluck your beard. The good-doer here is passive, allowing the ungrateful an active part. Cf. Օձը տաքցնողին կը խայթ: A snake bites him who warms him up.

The subjunctive tense form of both Armenian verbs (նստի՛ն, փիտե՛ն) allows also a conditional translation: *If I sit in your lap, I may (can, will) pluck your beard.* Many more synonymous proverbs expand on ingratitude in completely opposition to the biblical mentality of doing goodness.

Եղար եթմին պահապան, քեզի կ'ընէ թափառական:

(If) you have become an orphan's guardian, he makes you homeless.

Here, the theme of doing a particular type of goodness and the resulting ungratefulness enter into an entirely new topic of family, adoption and intimate human relations. The proverbial instruction assumes a causal relationship between doing good and getting punished.

The proverb tapestry from here leads in another direction: human relations are based upon benefiting from each other.

Բաղունդ թէ ծիրան կայ, բարով-աստու բարին էլ կայ:

If there are apricots in your garden, there will also be 'hello, how are you'.

Կովը մեռաւ, խուփը վերջեցաւ:

The cow died, the lot ended.

Refers to getting excluded from a community after suffering a major loss.⁵

A wider stream in the tapestry of proverbs relates deeds, responsibility, reward, and redemption in differing images and with differing conclusions and each of these proverbs relates to a different biblical passage.

Gal 6:7 [Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for] *Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

Complete equivalency: Ինչ որ ցանես, այն կը հնձես:

*Whatever you sow, you reap.*⁶

Results and consequences of deeds expand into multiple synonyms emphasizing redemption, save for the following with opposite mentality parallel:

Ps 126.5 *May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.*

Opposite Mentality: Դառը դասեց, դատարկ նստաւ:

He worked hard, remained empty-handed.

A *Nested Ideological Adage* to the above is also a *Thematic Adage* to:

Pr 1:31: *Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices.*

⁵ The loss of 'membership writs' because of a major personal loss is a common topic in folklore, cf. a well-known joke: *Half of my friends don't greet me after I became bankrupt. How about the other half? The other half does not know yet.*

⁶ The KJV English translation is closer to Armenian, cf: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap".

Փչածո՞ գդալդ պիտի գայ:

NIA: What you blow away, shall come back into your spoon.

The latter has several synonyms with related and unrelated imagery. Synonyms with related imagery:

Ինչ որ բրդես ամանդ, էն էլ կուգայ բերանդ:

What you crumble onto your plate, that will go into your mouth.

Ինչ 'օր բրդես, էն էլ կը խրթես:

What you crumple, that you gobble.

Դէ եփածո՞ ասպուրը գդլդէ:

Then spoon up the soup you made.

Several synonyms with *unrelated imagery* further develop the concept of redemption with a hint of positivism. They create *equivalency in meaning* with:

Deut 31:5 And the LORD shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you.

Mat 7:12 All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Ինչ կամիս ինձ, աստուած կամի քեզ:

Whatever you wish me, may God wish you.

Ինչ տաս հոգուդ, էն կ'երթայ արևուդ:

What you give for your soul, goes to your sun (that is: adds up to your life).

The theme of responsibility for actions continues in:

Pr 25:16 If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you be sated with it and vomit it.

Քաղցր-քաղցր ուտելու՞ն դառն-դառն փսխել կայ:

With sweet eating there's bitter vomiting.

Մեղրն ալ անուշ է, շատ ուտողին կը վնասէ:

The honey is sweet too but it hurts those who eat a lot of it.

These parallels link Armenian proverbs on food metaphors (as: *the soup and spoon*) in *Nested Ideological Adages* above, and also lead to the theme of condemning excessive behaviors:

Ամեն բան բարկնալէն կը կտրի, մարդը՝ հաստնալէն:

Everything gets cut off from thinning, and people, from getting fat. ???

Eccl 11:12 [Of making many books there is no end; and] much study is a weariness of flesh.

Գիտուն գիտնայ, քանց մազ կը բարկնայ, անգէտ լէ չհասկնայ, քանց գերան կը հաստնայ:

The guru who knows, thins down like a hair and the dumb who can't understand, rounds up like a log.

The last proverb further associates with the themes of education and knowledge expanding the tapestry in the direction of understanding and consideration; it also relates with the metaphors on the human body, compare:

Pr 25:20 He who sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on a wound.

Մարդ մարդու դարդ չիտէ, կէսգիշերին ժամ կը կանչէ:

One does not know one's pain, (and) tolls for the church at midnight.

Cf. also: Gal 6: 5: For each man will have to bear his own load.

The biblical imagery appears also in idiomatic expressions: վէրքի՞ն աղ ցաւել to sift salt on the wound (i.e.: to aggravate the hurt), and նռբաց, lit. open-assed, refers to an overly

generous person unable to take care of himself (basically remaining without the least of clothes to guaranty decency).

Misdirected knowledge and unwanted help in the following two proverbs create *equivalency in meaning* parallels with the following biblical passage, but diverge in particular features:

Luke 4:23 Physician heal thyself.

Դեղ ունիս, քո գլխին արա:

If you have medicine, use it for yourself (lit.: for your head).

The conventional meaning characterizes the assumed offerer of help to be unable to help and also in need of the same kind of help.

*Thematic Adage: Քաշալը ճար ունենայ իր գլխին կ'անի (կամ՝ իրա գլխու ճարը կը տեսնի):
If the bald have a remedy, he will take care of his head.*

The conventional meaning characterizes the expected helper to be unable to help and also in need of the same kind of help.

Yet a third, more detached parallel characterizes the offerer of help unaware or inconsiderate toward the problem, and therefore, not only unable to help but also able to annoy and bother:

Nested Ideological Adage: Քեզի համար կը քնիս, ուրիշի համար էրազ կը տեսնիս:

You sleep for yourself, but dream for others.

Sarcastic toward unsolicited help which feels like meddling.

The topic of futile help, particularly with a repetition of irrational actions always rendering the same fruitless results, continues in the following parallels:

Jer 13:23 Can Ethiopians change their skin or leopards their spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil.

Four proverbs parallel with this Bible passage, each using different pieces of the imagery employed in it—*Ethiopians, skin, leopards, doing good/evil*. They all refer to stubborn arrogance unable to learn or change opinions. However, these proverbs void the religious meaning of evil-doing versus good.

Անձրևն ինչ էնէ քարին, խրատն ինչ էնէ չարին:

*What can the rain do to the rock, and the advice to the mean?*⁷

Քարոզը խլին չի ազդի, անձրևը՝ քարին:

The preach won't affect the deaf, and the rain, the rock.

Կարմիր կովը կաշին չի փոխէ:

The red cow doesn't change its skin.

Leopards and other big cats are not native to Armenia, unlike cows and additionally, the red cow is a rarity.

Սևին սապոննն ինչ օգուտ (կ'ընէ), խևին խրատը:

What good is soap to the black and advice to insane?

The association with the Ethiopian, as well as to any race or nation are wiped away in the last Armenian proverb; 'black' in regard to human skin in Armenian merely denotes a darker complexion.⁸ According to cultural perceptions in modern English, the substitution of the ethnonym *Ethiopian* with the word *black* with its long history of referring to African origin does not bring a meaningful or special change. Just the contrary, the word սև (black) is void of racial-national

⁷ The 'rain over rock' image in this proverb is parallel to another Bible passage which I couldn't find this time.

⁸ Armenians may have very light, even extremely fair skin like Europeans as well as darker skin like the Mediterranean people and Middle Easterners. In the Armenian cultural concepts of beauty, the lighter the skin, the more beautiful one is considered, hence the proverb: "A person with a darker complexion (lit. black, a meaning similar to *moreno/a* in Spanish) may be beautiful too. Սևի սիրունը չկա՞յ: Isn't there a pretty one amongst the black? Սևին սիրունն ալ կ'ըլլայ: There are pretty ones amongst the black too. In my childhood, ladies avoided facial sun tan (even on a seacoast vacation) to maintain that norm of beauty.

connotations; historically there have been no close connections or interactions between Ethiopia and Armenia. The rare cases when Ethiopia is mentioned in Armenian folklore and ancient literature, it symbolizes a distant and remote place, almost the end of the world, along with India and China⁹.

The substitution of the biblical Ethiopians with the word *black* adds cultural concepts of beauty into the proverb, renders comprehensible mentality and shoots right into the target conclusion with the addition of the contradiction ‘advising the crazy’. The same way, the Leopold is substituted with a red cow to fit the cultural mentality. Changes of this kind are recorded in many *equivalency in meaning* parallels, as we saw in the discussion above (e.g.: Better is to carry stones with the wise than to eat pilaf with fools. Compare to its parallel at Eccl 7:4-5, p 8).

This tapestry of proverbs, which we began with the images of doing goodness and casting the bread upon waters, may continue endlessly, interweaving more images and metaphor, topics and themes. It demonstrates the integral unity of the semantic system of the Armenian proverbs.

⁹ Cf.: Sayat Nova: ... «Զթողի Յարաշ, նազանի».

A WORLD VISION

Նոյն ծաղկէն մեղուն մեղր կը շինէ, օձը պուտ թոյն:
From the same flower the bee makes honey, and the snake, a drop of poison.

This opposition to the biblical concept of ‘doing goodness to be rewarded in the heaven’ does not define the general mentality in Armenian proverbs. There is a dominant trend of belief in the final *worldly* justice when it comes to reward and punishment. The big picture of the world in Armenian proverbs does not ring a bell with the Bible; it maintains a far more ancient perception of the world. The reality in Armenian proverbs is presented in basic dichotomies and binary oppositions with everything having its other side.

Չկայ չարիք առանց բարիքի:

There is no evil without good (an opportunity).

As to an action guide, the Armenian proverbs state:

Գրքին երկու երեսն էլ կարդալու է:

Both sides of a book should be read.

This basic duality of the world reveals itself in a large number of particular oppositions, like colors, relations, appearances, etc.:

Սևն ու սպիտակը ջուրը անց կենալուս կ'երևայ:

The black and white appear when crossing through water.

The water in many Armenian proverbs symbolizes trouble; the black and white here stand for the good and evil, and the true and false. This symbolism goes far back into pre-historical times, into the emotional perceptions of light/white as safety and security, and in general for goodness and clarity because of the daylight and sunshine, opposing to the dark and black as the danger and the unknown of the night. This perception of light and dark emerges in every mythology and religious ideology, as well as in the conventional metaphors of every language which differentiates at least two basic colors.¹⁰ White and black also symbolize emotional ups and downs in Armenian proverbs. Pink paralleling white for happiness is rather new and seldom. These symbols too derive from the binary opposition of day and night, light and dark, safety and danger, good and evil in general

Սևս ներսն եմ էրել, սիպտակս՝ դուրսը:

I keep my blackness inside, and my whiteness, outside.

Իմ սև սրտին քու վարդագոյն տրուսիկ:

My black heart and your pink panties.

Black and white appear also as reversed symbols: black as stable essence solidity, a stable essence, and white, for temporary qualities or appearance with the black-essence weighing down in significance.

Սիպտակի տեսքը, սևի՝ համը:

The appearance of the white (is better and), the taste of the black.

Appearance, like any other concept in Armenian proverbs has dual significance.

Սիրուն(ի) երեսին փլաւ չի ուտուի (զգուի):

On a pretty face pilaf is not eaten (made).

Փլաւը քիչ'մ էլ երեսէն պտի ուտուի:

¹⁰ Berlin, Brent and Kay (1969). *Basic Color Terms*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. Lucy, John (1997). The linguistics of "color". In C.L. Hardin and Luisa Maffi (eds.) *Color Categories in Thought and Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pilaf is partly eaten by its appearance (looks).¹¹

Thus, almost each proverb has an antonym, an anti-statement proverb, and their interlace creates a world vision in which roughly everything may be both true and false, or good and bad depending on the perspective and surrounding circumstances. In other words, the general mentality in Armenian proverbs conveys the message about the dichotomy of things *and* instructs to appreciate the specific value of each side. This small list is sufficient to demonstrate the dualistic nature of the world view in Armenian proverbs, ‘the big picture’ which represents reality in contrasts and oppositions. We will leave a more detailed discussion of this particular view to another study. However, we must note that this mentality in Armenian proverbs hardly could have any direct relation or borne an influence from the Ancient Far East (like the Chinese Yin and Yang) because of the historically sparse and insubstantial contacts. It has more to do with a rational perception of the world, and the flexibility of the human concept of truth and goodness.

Direct Parallels

1. Complete Equivalency

Ecc1 11:1 Send out your bread upon waters, for after many days you will get it back.

Լաւուրթիւն ըրէ, ջուրը ձգէ, դէմդ կուգայ:

*Do goodness and throw it into the water; it will appear in front of you.*¹²

Complete equivalents parallel in form and meaning both in the Bible and in Armenian proverbs. The Bible has been a source of sayings for all Christian nations and Armenia is not an exception. It is only natural to find numerous folk sayings deriving directly from the biblical word with 1700 years of religious monopoly of Christianity and national identification of Armenians as Armenian-Christians (հայ քրիստոնէայ). For example:

Gal 6:7 *Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*¹³

Ինչ որ ցանես, այն կը հնձես:

*Whatever you sow, you reap.*¹⁴

Mt 7:7 *[Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;] knock and the door will be opened to you.*

Մինչև դուռը չթակես, բաց անող չի ըլնի:

Unless you knock at the door, no one will open it.

Complete Equivalency represents the purest type of parallels. However, even these lack a direct association with the Bible in the collective mentality of the speech community. They have an independent use all by themselves as folk sayings and their common use both by believers and atheists does not bring up a feeling of quoting the Bible or of speaking in a religious manner. Also, they are not necessarily the most frequently used proverbs among their synonyms. The most common proverb to *knock and it will be opened for you*, uses family metaphors and images for the same idea; *ask in order to get*.

Մինչև երեխան չլայ, մերը ծիծ չի տայ:

Unless the baby cries, the mother doesn't suckle it.

¹¹ Cf. the English proverb: Don't judge a book by its cover.

¹² Cf. also: Տուր, մի ափսոսար, առ, մի ամաչիր: Give, don't be sorry; take, don't be ashamed.

¹³ While choosing passages from the Bible, I rely on the familiarity of the reader with the Bible, otherwise, I realize that the citations may still not provide sufficient context revealing the in-depth message in the Bible passage and the fully corresponding conventional meaning of the cited Armenian proverbs.

¹⁴ The KJV translation is closer to the Armenian, cf: “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”.

Though seven centuries is a small span for folklore, its attestation by the famous medieval poet Frikk (13th c.) confirms its popularity through time:

Երբ զարթնի տղայն ու լայ, գէն ծծեցնէ իւր մայրն զնա:

When the baby wakes up and cries, only then the mother suckles it.

The images in this proverb resonate with the same passage from Mathews, cf.:

*Mt 7:9 For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ... **what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?***

The similarity of images and meaning of this proverb (unless the baby cries, the mother won't suckle) with Mt 7:9 creates a parallel with meaning equivalency and a nested ideological adage.

The majority of *complete equivalency* parallels do not sound like condensed and neat proverbs in the Bible unless they are used as proverbs in English too (cf. the first *complete equivalency* below). Their Armenian counterparts have obtained a proverbial form and abstraction from the immediate biblical metaphor, image and conclusion through endless use. Cf.:

Mt 12:33 The tree is known by his fruit.

Պտուղը ծառից հեռու չի ընկնի:

Fruit doesn't fall far from the tree.¹⁵

Cf. English: An apple doesn't fall far from its tree.

Cor 13:2 I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains.

Հաւատը սարեր շուռ կու տայ:

The faith turns over mountains.

Job 6:27 Ye dig a pit for your friend.¹⁶

Ուրիշի համար փոս փորողը ինքը մէջը կ'իյնայ:

Who digs a pit for another, will fall into it.

Jn 10:26: [And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who] built his house upon the sand.

Աւազի վրէն տուն չեն շինիլ:

Don't build a house on the sand.

Diachronic Complete Equivalents

A large number of *complete equivalents* used in the ancient Armenian literature indicate with the traditionalism and continuity of proverbs of their time but have not survived as folk saying. “Yet any proverb ‘must ‘prove’ a certain traditionality and frequency in order to be considered verbal folklore” (Mieder 95). There is no diachronic dictionary of Armenian proverbs; however, the frequency of use of these proverbs in the ancient Armenian literature unequivocally isolates them as traditional sayings of their time. For example, ‘eye for eye’. In the Bible it is used several times with different extensions.

Ex 21:24 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

Deut 19:21: Your eye shall not pity; it shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

¹⁵ A *tree fruit* or plain *fruit* in many idioms indicates a person with special legacy, e.g. ինչ ծառի պտուղ է, a rhetorical question to state the referee's assumed negative qualities due to birth inheritance. Or խօսքի տակ մնացող պտուղ չէ ‘he is not the type of fruit to swallow words’.

¹⁶ From King James Version. In RSV: You would even cast lots over the fatherless, and bargain over your friend.

Lev 24:20 Fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has disfigured a man, he shall be disfigured.

Ակն ընդ ական եւ ատամն ընդ ատաման:
Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.

In ancient Armenian texts, only the ‘eye for eye and tooth for tooth’ parts appear with a proverb-like continuity. It has the currency of a slogan in the fights for national liberation against non-Christian invaders, and an equally significant value in the moral fight for overcoming the Christian ideology of non-violence and tolerance. The modern counterpart of this proverb parallels with equivalency in meaning (see the next subtitle):

Աչքդ հանողի հոգին հանէ:
Who pokes out your eye, poke out his soul.

One of the commonly cited sayings in Ancient Armenian literature is a direct translation of the first proverb from the Book of Proverbs; it is the very first sentence written down in the Mesropian alphabet.¹⁷

*Pr 1:2 That men may know wisdom and instruction, understand words of insight.*¹⁸
ճանաչել զհմաստութիւն եւ զխրատ, իմանալ զբանս հանճարոյ:

This aphorism has a lengthy literary use and is well known to the students of humanities and religious studies, just as the ‘eye for eye’. The folk counterpart below sounds more juicy and laconic, and may be as old as the history of writing. It is a nested ideological adage:

Ով կարդայ, նա մարդ ա:
He who reads (studies) is a person.

And a synonym to the above:

Ուսումը ոսկի բիլազուկ է:
Education is a gold bracelet.

2. Equivalency in Meaning

Ecc 11:1 Send out your bread upon waters, for after many days you will get it back.
Լաւութիւն արա, ջուրը գցի, ձուկը չիմանայ, Աստուած կ'իմանայ:
Do goodness and cast onto the waters; if fish don't know, God will.

The *equivalents in meaning* express practically the same ideas through a similar wording with slight and insignificant transformations. There is quite a large number of these parallels. In the example above, the Armenian proverb lacks the word *bread* though its trace as food for the immediate receiver, the fish, remains. The conclusion of the proverb brings the additional meaning that the receiver may not appreciate it but God will acknowledge.

Mt 7:3 Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye but do not notice the log in your own eye?

Իրա աչքի գերանը թողած, ուրիշի աչքի չոփը ման կուզայ:
Having left aside the log in his eye, he looks for a twig (toothpick) in another's eye.

Both the Armenian proverbs and Bible account for responsibility for one's own faults and failures, with a recommendation of non-critical, non-judgmental attitude toward others' faults. Both use the conventional metaphor of having something bothering in eye, thus forming equivalency in meaning with a good deal of equivalency also in form. They differ in syntactic structure as

¹⁷ The alphabet is a unique to the Armenian language phonetic writing system created circa 405 AD as a shield against assimilation and with the explicit ideological purpose of translating the Bible into Armenian.

¹⁸ The Old Armenian translation, like in many other cases, is more closely related with the KJV version: *To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding.*

transformations on surface structure: The rhetorical question of Bible is eliminated; its second clause has the initial position in Armenian proverbs as a participle phrase. Also, Mathew speaks about being judgmental of one's brother, whereas the Armenian proverbs has a generalized message directed toward everyone which is the true meaning of the biblical 'brother' in this passage. *Speck* բիծ is a literary word, unusual for Armenian proverbs' vocabulary; hence the proverb has a more colloquial substitute in չոփ 'tiny twig' with the connotation of *insignificant in value*.

Eccl 7:4-5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of the fools.

Լաւ է իմաստունի հետ քար քաշես, քան անխելքի հետ փլաւ ուտես:

Better is to carry stones with wise than to eat pilaf with fools.

The biblical *rebuke* and *song* have been exchanged with Armenian cultural values. The country is mountainous, and in order to expose a piece of land useful for agriculture, one often has to carry out and clean it up from rocks and stones. This hard but gratifying work is preferable if done with wise men, rather than having pilaf, a staple meal for the wealthy, if the companion or host is a fool.

The emphasis in this category is on the meaning; that is, the conclusion or recommendation in the Armenian proverbs is ideologically identical with the selection in the Bible. However, in this type of parallels, there is also a considerable equivalency in form (otherwise, we would deal with an ideological adage). Thus, given a complete equivalency in meaning, the proverbial form may differ quite apparently, as in the aforementioned 'eye for eye'.

Ex 21:24 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.

Աչքդ հանողի հոգին հան:

Who pokes out your eye, poke out his soul.

The complete equivalent Ակն ընդ ական is well known in learned circles as a literary aphorism and still quoted in this Old Armenian form. The folk version "Who pokes out your eye, poke out his soul" recommends the same vengeance and perhaps goes back to an original source first attested in 18th century BC, in the "Code of Hammurabi", the Babylonian king Hammurabi's code of laws.¹⁹ The antiquity of the proverb is evident in its double figurative structure and the word play with two idioms (used also independently) which function as the lemma and the remma in the proverb. The lemma is in a present participle phrase of the idiom 'to poke out one's eye' with a figurative meaning 'to take advantage of someone and punish them harshly for minor errors', it contains a hint of dishonoring too. 'Poke out one's soul' refers to mental abuse and psychological torture, lit.; take the soul out of the body. These idioms are extensions of common in Armenian conventional metaphors of 'eye' for *knowledge* and 'soul' for *life*²⁰, both connected and thus rhymed with the same verb հանել *to take or poke out, subtract, separate*. These layers of figurative speech come together to create a densely succinct proverb which carries a raw, throbbing revenge—whoever punishes you for minor errors deserves and asks for losing his/her soul while the body drags on.²¹ In comparison, Ակն ընդ ական *eye for eye* in modern Armenian sounds civil and inflated because of its Grabar form.

Pr 17:10 A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.

¹⁹ Article 196: If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.

<http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/hammurabi.htm> 03-02-04

²⁰ Details on conventional metaphors in Armenian see in Hagopian 2000.

²¹ The belief that one may lose the soul, that is die de facto, while the physical body maintains a miserable existence may be an interpretation of Alzheimer's or other brain illnesses and is transparent in several paremia: Հոգին տուել, գողտուց կ'ապրի: S/He has delivered the soul, lives on secretly (proverb). Աստուած ջան, նախ կեանքս առ, յետոյ հոգիս: Dear God, first take my life, then my soul (prayer phrase). Երկու օրուայ մահ տուր: Give me death in two days (i.e., short duration of death-bed; prayer phrase). Չեռս բան, ոտս գերեզման: Hands in work, feet in grave (proverb).

Գիտունին մէկ, անգէտին՝ հազար:
*Once to the wise, a thousand times, to the fool.*²²

The Armenian proverb has a more general, wider meaning; however, both the form and the meaning are in accord with this Bible passage. It is a hypernym with multiple synonyms and variations (containing also the verbs *tell* or *talk*), but this most generic proverb in its field of synonyms remains the closest to the Bible.²³ Note that in Armenian proverbs the number *thousand* is oft used with a general meaning of *many*, especially in opposition to *one*. In the Bible, this opposition is quite common too, e.g.: Josh 23:10 ‘One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fights for you, as he hath promised you.’ Cf. Մարդ կայ, հազար արժէ, մարդ կայ, մէկ չարժէ: Someone is worth a thousand; and another, not worth even one.

Mt 5-37: Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil. Աստուծ օխնել է «հա-ն», օխնել ա «չէ-ն», անիծել ա «հա-ն ու չէ-ն»:
*The Lord blessed the ‘yes’, and blessed the ‘no’, but cursed the ‘yes and no’.*²⁴

Pr 17:8 A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of him who gives it; wherever he turns he prospers.

Կաշառքը (փողը) մութ տեղը լոյս կուտայ:
Bribes lighten the darkness. Or: Money illuminates dark places.

Again, the Armenian proverbs has a wider and more generalized ‘proverbial’ meaning, especially the version with ‘money’ due to the replacing of the *magic stone* with *light* and removing the particular parties of givers and receivers.

Pr 25:6-7 Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great; for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of the prince.

Վարը նստիր որ վերը քեզի տեղ տան:
Sit below so that they give you a sit above.

The proverb eliminates the titles but maintains the general concept of social hierarchy and position around a dining table.²⁵ The key meaning unifying this parallel is the social appreciation of humbleness which is viewed as one of the corner stones for progress in social hierarchy. It is interesting to note that in a tight, set, and closed communities of historical Armenia there is however something—being humble—that may serve to progress in the social hierarchy.

²² Wisdom versus foolishness is a favored topic in Armenian folklore, as it is in the Bible. Cf. a contemporary joke. Someone explains something to another, concluding with: Did you understand it? No. The first person goes on explaining and repeating all the same thrice. At last the listener says, Are you a fool, man? Don’t you understand that I can’t understand?

²³ Synonyms for ‘Once to the wise, a thousand times to the fool’ are NIA parallels, e.g., Սինարի գլխին հազար բեռ կակալ լցնես, մէկը վրէն չի մնայ: If you put a thousand loads of walnuts on the minaret, none will stay there. Հասկցողին մէկ ըսէ, չհասկցողին՝ հազար և մէկ: Tell those who understand once; tell those who don’t, a thousand and one times.

²⁴ Cf. also the IA: Բալքի-ն ցանել են, չի բուսնէ: The ‘perhaps’ was sown but it didn’t sprout. These two proverbs are not of frequent use, neither ‘direct speech’ is a cultural characteristic of the Armenian conversation. Frequent is the use of the following proverbs: Շիտակ խօսքը հանաքով (օր: իշուն) կ’ըսեն: Direct words are said with jokes (or: to donkeys).

²⁵ Other paremia maintain the concept of social hierarchy around a table, e.g., սեղանի գլուխը at the head of the table, վերի գլուխը տեղ բացէք open up a sit at the top (of the table); these two refer to the honorable seat, and the next two, to the dishonoring seat: վարի գլուխը or դռան ետեւն են գցել he was thrown (arranged to be seated) at the lower head/behind the door.

quite different conventional meanings in the following Armenian proverbs matching the well-known passage about *hands* in Mathew's Gospel.

Mt 6:3-4 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Մէկ ձեռքը չի գիտեր թէ միւսն ինչ կ'ընէ:

One hand doesn't know what the other does. About a confused person unable to find a solution or make a decision; a messy situation in general.²⁸

Կնկայ մէկ ձեռքը պիտի չիմանայ միւս ձեռքն ինչ կ'ընէ:

A woman's hand shouldn't know what the other hand does. In regard to a savvy housewife putting away for a dark day

The proverbs in Armenian leave out 1. the idea of giving alms, 2. the hope for reward from God, and 3. the differentiation of right/left hands. These differences strip off the religious connotations inserting instead conventional common sense in regard to practical matters.

Mt 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Արեւ ես աջ ձեռքովդ, լաց եղ չար աչքերովդ:

You've done it with your right hand, cry with those mean eyes of yours.

The formal equivalency concerns only to doing wrong with the right hand. The *right hand* in the proverb indicates a conscious and intentional wrongdoing, versus the autonomy of the biblical right hand which should be punished per se. *Eyes* in the proverb symbolize knowledge, and their *meanness*, the intention. The punishment in the proverb is here and now, versus in the next life in Bible. The hand as a tool is a common metaphor and appears also in several lexical matches (see p.15).

Mt 5:29 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

Լաւ է մարդու աչքը դուրս գայ, քան թէ անունը:

Better to have one's eye pop out than one's name.

Plucking the eye is a quite frequent theme in Armenian paremia. The proverb refers to high moral standards, honor. A 'popped out name' is an idiom meaning *to become infamous*. The idiom **աչքը հանել** *to severely punish one with irreversible consequences* forms a lexical match. The idiom is also used as an idiomatic threat of possible punishment if one does not yield. The parallelism both in form and meaning is apparent though there is no close match in the form and the meaning omits the religious side: the possible punishment with hell is substituted with the worldly loss of honor (name). The comparative structure of the proverb forms an ideological adage with:

Pr 22:1 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches.

Whereas the following fable-like proverb uses the 'eye plucking' metaphor to express the opposite mentality:

Աստուած մէկու մը ըսաւ. Քեզի լաւութիւն պիտի ընեն, բայց գիտնաս թէ անոր կրկնակին դրացիիդ պիտի ընեն: Ինչ կ'ուզես, ըսէ տեսնեն: -Աչքիս մէկը հանէ,

separate themselves from other living beings and who saw the God in every creature, the former proverb may be the parody. These are only speculations since no attestations of any of these proverbs are known from earlier periods.

²⁸ A similar saying is used also in English.

Տէր Աստուած, - ըսաւ ճարդը:

God told someone: I am going to do goodness unto you but be it known that I am going to double it for your neighbor. Tell me, what is it that you want? Dear Lord, says the man, poke out one of my eyes.

Eccl 8:15 And I commend enjoyment, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink, and enjoy himself, [for this will go with him in his toil through the days of life which God gives him under the sun].

Քէֆ էնողին քէֆ չի պակսի (սուգ էնողին էլ՝ սուգ:)

He who parties, will have no lack of parties (he who mourns, will always mourn).

The first part of this proverb is the title of a story by Avetik Isahhakian. Thanks to this story, the proverb gained nationwide popularity and use since early 20th c. The second part (who mourns will always mourn) is a folk extension of the first part and is used only in specific situations, particularly about people who always complain and grumble. This parallel reveals a key similarity in form with a basic difference in meaning. The proverb views cheerfulness as a human characteristic and habit; enjoying in delight or mourning in despair is an individual inclination not entirely dependent on life circumstances because life provides opportunities for both. The Armenian proverb omits the concept of toil versus the Bible parallel which views cheerfulness as a way of life for those who work, as a reward for work, and, moreover, as the meaning of life.²⁹

Isa 49:15 Can a woman forget her nursing child or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

Մերը մանուկն ուրացաւ:

The mother denied the child.

The proverb describes a public calamity (earthquake, slaughter, etc.) in the midst of which all support systems collapse and every unbearable and unimaginable thing may become possible, such as a mother denying her child. It never refers to a specific person or relationship but to the situation in general³⁰. The parallel between the Bible and the Armenian proverb is obvious in the images employed but the conclusions derived are completely different.

The following two are diachronic *equivalents in form* inherited directly from Grabar. They have not survived as folk sayings but are quite well-known to the public from literary use and often cited in learned cycles.

*Mt 26: 41 [Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation;] the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*³¹

Հոգիս յոժար է, մարմինս է տկար

My spirit is willing but my flesh is weak.

The proverb in Armenian has acquired a different meaning. It is often used by scribes of ancient manuscripts not in sense of overcoming worldly temptations but informing the future readers of their willingness *and* inability to continue copying the manuscript, to inform that they are weak and weary physically, and fearful to leave the work incomplete before their last hour strikes. The same meaning is inferred in its modern literary use; the concept of temptations and sinning are gone.

²⁹ In this sense there is a common idiom, a lexical match: eating and drinking will remain. (remain practically means ‘go with him’ like in Eccl. 8:15. Ուտել-խմելը կը մնայ): The idiom refers to having fun as a lasting value and memory and worthwhile engagement through life—everything will pass but the fun will remain. The idiom has many open-ended variations: Ուտել, խմելն էլ չեղնիր, ինչ պիտի էնեինք: If there was no eating-drinking, what would we do. Eating-drinking in Armenian includes and assumes and oft substitutes to the concept of partying, and having fun, just like the English: To eat, and to drink, and to be merry.

³⁰ Recalling the events of the genocide, my grandmother often cited this proverb.

³¹ Somewhat different are these Bible passages in KJV: Mt 26:41 Mark 14:38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

*Deut 8:3 [And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that] **man does not live by bread alone**, [but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.]*

Ոչ միայն հացիւ (այլեւ բանիւ) (Eghishe)
Not by bread alone (but also with word).

The Armenian proverb has an emphasis on non-material values just as the Bible. The latter of course include but are not limited to religious values. The presence of God however is secondary; men are against men in an unequal fight for maintaining identity as Armenians or giving up and assimilating with the invader. This proverb has been a slogan in ancient Armenian literature, probably a folk saying as well; it has inspired the ages long struggle of Armenians for survival and independence.

Equivalents in form are quite similar to parallels in opposite mentality. Both types match the Bible in form, the difference is in that equivalents in form derive a somewhat different conclusion, while opposite mentality parallels contradict the Bible in the ideological realm (see below).

4. Lexical Matches

Earlier (p. 2) we discussed the idioms *Դուշմանիս չեմ կամենայ*: *May it not happen even to my enemy*; and *Դուշմանիդ (թող) լինի*³² *May it happen to your enemy*, which exhibit lexical parallelism between the Bible and Armenian proverbs. The most condensed form of parallels is expressed with lexical matches, when biblical images or formulae are condensed into an idiom or even a word in Armenian. These are still direct parallels as the biblical passage is recognizable and identifiable; the meaning may be opposite to Bible (like in the example above) or in accord with it. Lexical matches are diverse components of the Armenian lexicon: words, common phrases, idioms, conventional metaphors, adages, and other paremia, paralleling with biblical images and metaphors in a quite condensed manner.

For example, the adjective *անարատ* *pure* is perceived as a simple word by modern users of Armenian. It consists of the negative prefix *ան-* (corresponding to *un-*, *dis-*, or *de-*) and the noun *արատ* *defect, deficiency, blemish*. The latter is practically unknown in dialects; in standard Armenian it is used as a direct literary loan from Old Armenian. Contrary to the root, the word *անարատ* is a frozen composite widely used in dialects and conversational speech with the meaning of *genuine, pure, true, real*, and *reliable* in regard to culturally significant concepts, particularly about people and food, e.g., *անարատ կաթ կերած* *noble, honest*, lit. ‘one who has eaten genuine milk’. Thus, the significance and special use of the word *անարատ*, especially compared to its seldom used root *արատ*, creates an obvious match with some Bible passages, e.g.:

Lev 21:21 No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the Lord's offerings by fire; since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God.

Mt 7:6 Do not give what is holy to dogs.

Շներոց եղաւ:

Became a belonging of dogs. In regard to goodness wasted.

Շան ու գիլու բաժին եղաւ/դառաւ:

Their lot befell to (was shared by) dogs and wolves.

Dogs, and also cats are deemed unsacred animals in the system of cultural superstitions but with the image of dogs are linked several folk adages like the above. The image of wolves represents

³² The existential verb rarely has this standard form of Eastern Armenian, more commonly I have heard the expression used with colloquial forms of the verb.

ruthless exploitation and beastly destruction³³. These sayings refer to wasted goodness— a person, worthy status or wealth—lost and scattered without good use. They are fixed phrases used by themselves (e.g.: Շան ու գիլու բաժին a share of/for dogs and wolves) with conventional meaning like proverbs but they differ from proverbs with a great deal of incompleteness and dependence on the context.

Job 6:12 Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh bronze?

Քարէ ջաօն եմ:

Is my flesh of stone?

The conventional meaning in this parallel matches the biblical sense but lacks the tragic connotations of Job's story. Like in Job's story, the phrase refers to the need of patience and the lack of support or hope.³⁴ However, the rhetorical question in Armenian addresses an equal human being, not God and compares one's burdens and bearings with that of their interlocutor with a hint of competition—my lot is worse than yours; I can complain more than you. It may also be used ironically. Several other common phrases in Armenian match 'biblical stones'.

Mt 24:2 There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Քարը քարին չմնաց (չթողին):

No stone remained (was left) upon stone.

The idiom refers to utter destruction like the Bible parallel; it may have a hint on search (destroy to find hidden treasure) but no association with the apocalyptic metaphors of Bible (see also: 1st Kings 9:7, Jer 5:10, Jer 26:18, Micah 3:12, Luke 19:44).

'Casting a stone' has different meanings in Bible and each has a lexically different parallel in Armenian.

*Lam 3:53 They flung me alive into the pit and cast stones on me.*³⁵

Քար դնել վրան

to conceal, lit.: to put a stone over it.

The idiom means 'to mysteriously and secretly end and conceal something under the cover of silence, particularly to seal the details of a plot, a significant case, a life story. It implies power and conspiracy.

(Գործին) քար գցել

To destroy dishonestly, lit.: throw/cast a stone onto the matter

This idiom implies plot like the above but in a lesser degree. It means to unfairly destroy an arrangement by gossiping or badmouthing one of the participant parties, often refers to the cancellation of a near-future betrothal or marriage.

John 8:7 [And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first] to throw a stone at her."

(Արի կ'եղնի եղ) Փեշիդ քարը թափէ:

(Would you please) Drop down those rocks from your hem.

³³ A variety of sheep in Armenia has a thick fatty tail (դմակ). Wolves are known to cut these blubber-tails and destroy the entire flock. Hence the proverb: Գայլն ընկաւ հօտի մէջ, ամեն մարդ իրա դմակը կը պահէ: The wolf fell into the flock, each guards their own tail.

³⁴ Job 6:11-13 What is my strength, that I should wait? And what is my end, that I should be patient? Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh bronze? In truth I have no help in me, and any resource is driven from me.

³⁵ The story parallels to the primary Armenian Christian legend about Gregory the Illuminator being flung alive into a deep pit (Խոր Վիրապ) and surviving there by God's mercy for 30 years, later to become the first head of Armenian State Church.

Both the Bible and the Armenian proverbs refer to the punishment by stoning. The saying in Armenian is wiped off that meaning; it becomes apparent only analytically. It is used to convince someone to back up from a decision (which the speaker considers wrong) or simply to stop being stubborn and face the facts. Often used instead or with phrases meaning, let's do (something beforehand refused by the listener).

Gen 3:19 You are dust, and to dust you shall return. Cf. also: Ps 29:28-29 For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. Yea, to him shall all the proud of the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and he who cannot keep himself alive.

Հող էիր, հող դարձիր (դառաւ)
You were dust, turn into dust (turned)

From the Armenian burial service, cf. with English: Ashes to ashes dust to dust.

Another lexical match can be observed between:

Ps 72:9 May his foes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust!

Փռչի կուլ տուող
One who swallows dust.

In regard to insignificant and ignored people *paper pushers*, the useless workers always around doing nothing.

Mt 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Օ՞ւնձ(ե՛) քո՞նձի ձեռքը

May the (my/your) hand dry out.

Hands and feet in Armenian paremia often employ the conventional metaphor of tools, like in this idiom. It is a widely used curse for someone whose actions have brought about unexpectedly dire or tragic consequence: Often self-directed, it assumes not knowing or suspecting the possible outcome. The opposite, a blessing *ձեռքերդ դալար* *may your hands flourish/stay young*, is far less used and with a banal meaning, e.g., directed to a good cook, craftsman, or hostess.

Mt 4:-6 [and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up,] lest you strike your foot against a stone."

Ոտդ քարի չգայ:

May your feet not strike against a stone.

This is a blessing, a wish of success and good luck. Also used as an idiom, especially with irony, *Ոտքը քարի եկաւ* *his feet stumbled, he tripped against a stone*, that is, encountered an unexpected (or well-deserved) obstacle.

Ecl 4:15 [I saw all] the living who move about under the sun, [as well as that youth, who was to stand in his place;]

Արեւդ ապրի (մեռնի, թաղեմ). երկար արեւ լինես

May your sun live (die, I bury it); a long(lasting) sun to you.

Many blessings, curses, and other paremia use the metaphor of sun for one's life span, a quite unique feature in Armenian. An obvious parallel is observed with the common expression *under the sun* used in Bible and common in many languages. The Armenian phrases corresponding to *under the sun* are *աշխարհիս տակ/վրայ* *under/on the world* (common, everyday), and *լուսնի տակ* *under the moon* (literary or poetic).

Pr 25:12 Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear.

Ականջիդ օղ արա:

Remember my reproof and don't do it ever again. Lit.: Make it a ring on your ear.

Used as a threat and reproach to not repeat one's mistake. Both the form and use of this phrase match well the Bible.

2 Cor 12:7 And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated.

The concept of a thorn in the flesh is a biblical metaphor for temptation and sin. In Armenian lexical matches, the thorn relates with the human conscience in general, not only a religious sin, as in English 'persistent annoyance or difficulty', see www.dictionary.com.

Դոշակի փուշը *the thorn in one's mattress* refers to frustration, particularly trouble to fall asleep for someone in love.

Another idiom աչքի փուշ *a thorn in the eye* refers to an person who has become undesirable for someone with whom s/he used to be in a good relationship; for instance, one may say, 'after that event, I have become the thorn of his eye, s/he won't see me or talk with me. In some proverbs, a thorn in the finger refers to annoyance, something insignificant but constantly bothersome. The first proverb refers to extreme selfishness, and the second, to extreme loneliness.

Մատից փուշ հանող պտուղ չէ:

He isn't a fruit who would pull out a thorn from one's finger.

Մատից փուշ հանող'մ չունի:

Has no one to pull out a thorn from his finger.

Cf.: However small the thorn in your foot, pull it out before going on. *Persian*

Gal 5:4. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

This passage has two lexical matches, one matches the form and differs in meaning (շնորհից ընկնել fall off/from grace) and the other matches the meaning but is further removed from Bible in form (շնորհազրկել, -ուել fall from grace)

Both idioms refer to drastic and negative changes for a person but they are also distinct in meaning and use. The first idiom as a rule is self-referred about disappointing oneself by falling from graceful, socially accepted looks, abilities and lifestyle either because of health and age reasons, or for losing social position and/or wealth. It is too negative to direct toward others; stylistically, it belongs to conversational informal speech. The second word (used also as շնորհազուրկ անել/լինել as transitive or reflexive verb phrase: *make one to fall from grace/become fallen from grace*) high formal register, refers to relationships, and corresponds to the English idiom *to fall from grace*, that is, lose special rights and privileges, no longer deserve to receive grace due to a socially dominant position or from a powerful person. In this case, someone else is disappointed in the object of disappointment while in the first idiom both the subject and object are the same person. Neither infers God's disappointment in his subject, neither matches Bible in meaning exactly.

Col 4:6 [Let your speech always be gracious,] seasoned with salt, [so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.]

Mt 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.

The concept of salt as seasoning for speech and food is common in the Bible; it appears in several Armenian idioms and proverbs.³⁶

³⁶ Lakoff's studies on conventional metaphors reveal their function as self-fulfilling prophesies for the members of the speech communities. The same is true also in regard to paremia, such as proverbs, adages, aphorisms,

Ալնի-ալնի դուրս տալ
Bubble, chatter, lit. pour out (from mouth) without salt.

An idiom to define boring and pointless talking.

Ալնի (անալի, ալանի) մարդ
Unimportant, uninteresting person not to be considered seriously, lit. unsalted person.

The ironic extension as an adjacency pair to this idiom: մի քիչ աղ ցանել put salt (to season) shows that even though the word *unsalted* in Armenian appears in several dialects variations, its connection with *salt* is clearly perceived and therefore, both idioms contain living, functioning metaphors (the context differentiates this phrase from its homonym, *to sift salt on [wounds]*).

Աղուհաց (ուտել, մոռանալ, ուրանալ)
Salt and bread (eat, forget, deny).

The salt again is the seasoning, and the bread, the staple food. They symbolize life's favors; eating them assumes togetherness and refers to going through life together, and forgetting or denying ingratitude. These idioms have overgrown the conventional meanings of their constituents and refer to a more abstract concept, to social order, the conventional pact inside the speech community and its writs of conduct.

Along with idioms, there are also proverbs paralleling with salt as seasoning for speech and lifestyle in general which take us into the next category of thematic adages.

5. Thematic Adages

By the degree of parallelism thematic adages are a step further removed from the equivalents in form and meaning. They also contain some degree of compression as the lexical matches but the compression goes into another dimension. If in lexical matches a biblical passage is condensed into a phrase or word, then in thematic adages the biblical themes, be they metaphors, images or concepts, and even stories, are compressed into a one-sentence complete proverb in Armenian. They have the same basic meaning but they leave out religious connotations like other parallels presented above. Often *Thematic Adages* employ a biblical image cut out of the biblical context and with a completely different proverbial conclusion. For example, let's compare two more proverbs using salt as universal seasoning:

Col 4:6 [Let your speech always be gracious,] seasoned with salt.

Աշխարհն աղով, աղն էլ համով:

The world (is measured, or functions) with salt, and the salt with its taste.

Conventional meaning: when everything is done by law and order, everything turns out fine.

Անհամ, անհոտ, անժուր կորկոտ:

Tasteless, scentless, oilless millet.

The proverb does not explicitly mention salt but the description of a bore, an uninteresting and useless person implies his lack of 'salt'.

Gen 3:3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'

Արգելուած պտուղը քարցր է:

Forbidden fruit is sweet.

The entire story of paradise lost and its dire consequences is condensed in a proverb. The parallel with the Bible is obvious though the formal connection is loose. The conventional meaning of the proverb too provides only a loose link: banning and unattainably only make things more desirable

and idioms etc. In that sense it is not unexpected that salt is deemed an indispensable seasoning in Armenian cultural cuisine, insomuch that current medical studies about the harm of salty foods meet serious obstacles.

and attractive, and make us forget the possible negative outcomes.³⁷ One of the most common everyday proverbs, it is frequently used to account for children's irrational behavior. The English use of the phrase, forbidden fruit as a *prohibited article* is a lexical match with the Bible quite different from the proverb in Armenian.

*Job 22:29 When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; [and he shall save the humble person].*³⁸

Կեանքը սանդուղք է, կ'իջնես էլ, կ'ելնես էլ:

Life is a staircase; it will go both up and down.

The Armenian proverb views ups and downs as the universal condition for all humans, independent of their sins, pride or humbleness.

Mt 10:12 As you enter the house, greet it.

Բարևն աստծունն է:

A greeting (hello) is Godly.

Both the form and the meaning in this parallel diverge in slightly; the biblical recommendation per Mt 10:11 is for strangers: 'And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it, and stay with him until you depart'.

The conventional meaning of the Armenian proverbs is about established relationships which have gone astray. It recommends to still offer a greeting to those who have wronged you, or in case the relationship has fallen apart. We have to add that the Armenian cultural concepts of politeness do not assume to greet strangers, that is, to say a 'hi' or 'how are you' as good manners require in modern American English. However, there is a clear parallel between the Bible and Armenian proverb here through relying on a 'hello' as a good start or re-start.

Heb 13.2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Դոճաղն աստունն է:

A guest is from God.

Դոճախը (մեր) գլխի վրայ տեղ ունի:

A guest has place over (the host's) head.

Gal 3: 10: For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them."

Սևով սպիտակի վրայ գրած է:

Written with black upon white.

The proverb refers to accepted norms as clear-cut common knowledge. The phrase *for it is written* is quite common in Bible as a reference to the book of the law. In Armenian *with black on white* is added for that universality and clarity. In the cultural mentality, the 'absolute law' is the order of worldly things; in no way it is connected with the Lord's laws, or the ten commandments, etc.

Pr 1:24 Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded.

Ըսողին լսող է պետք:

No use of talking if no one considers. Lit.: A speaker needs a listener.

³⁷ Many synonyms complement this perception, cf., for example: Դեռու տեղի ձեճն անուշ է: *Faraway places sound sweet.*

³⁸ The parallel is clearly observable with the KJV. In the SRV, the same passage is as follows: For God abases the proud, but he saves the lowly.

The theme of people ignoring the Lord's words and suffering the consequences is quite common in the Bible. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, with the salvation of the only righteous person is a good illustration for this theme, for instance: Isa 1:10 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

The Armenian proverb maintains the essence of the message; between two people, if one has knowledge in some area and tells the other, there will be no use unless the other listens, in the sense of obeying or concurring.

Mark 6:5, KJV And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

Օ»éù¹ ·ÉĒÝ»ñÇóë¹ ³Ýá³Ĵë:

May your hand be over our head.

The healing touch of the Bible appears as the touch for support and defense in the blessing.

Pr 25:26 Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

Աղբիւրը ակէն կը պղտորի:

A spring gets polluted at its source.

The metaphor in Armenian proverbs relates with Bible but offers a quite different conclusion in its conventional meaning: the source of corruption is at the height of the social hierarchy.

Pr 25:14 As clouds and wind without rain, So is he that boasteth himself of his gifts falsely.

Two proverbs form thematic adages; the first, with images and the second, with the meaning:

Ամեն ամպ անձրև չի բերի:

Not every cloud brings forth rain.

That is, not every endeavor and effort has results; no association with loud boasting.

The metaphor is used also by Grigor Narekatsi in the *Book of Mourning* Մի տաղէ ինձ ամպել եւ ոչ անձրեւել *Give me not getting clouded and not rain* extended with երկնել եւ ոչ ծնանել *to be in labor and not deliver*. It suggests the possible use of this proverb since ancient times.

Պարապ տակառը շատ ձայն կը հանէ:

The empty barrel makes a lot of noise.

This proverb parallels with the meaning of the same *Pr 25:14* with a different, yet similar metaphor: the emptiness of the barrel is the worthlessness of a brag, and the loud noise made by it, his hubbub.

Eccl 4:8 A person who has no one, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

The moral of this passage, *work or goods which don't serve to the well-being of others is senseless and vain*, is quite common in Armenian proverbs. Several proverbs aggregate around these themes of company/loneliness and greed. Also, the Bible passage implies that loneliness is not becoming for people and condemns greed. The first theme has two interesting parallels in Armenian proverbs, both asserting the collectivist spirit of the culture:

Մէնակութիւնը Աստուծոյ կը վայելէ:

Solitude befits the God.

Ընկերովի մահը հարսանիք է:

Dying with friends is a wedding.

Job 13:25 Will You cause a driven leaf to tremble? Or will You pursue the dry chaff?

Անպտուղ ծառին քար քող չի եղնի:

No one throws rocks at a barren tree.

Another line of Armenian proverbs affirms greed as a universal characteristic of a human being, with the metaphor of *eyes expressing desires* (see Hagopian, 2003).

Eccl 4:8 ... eyes are never satisfied with riches. Cf. also:

Pr 22:9 He who has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.

(Մարդու) Աչքը ծակ է:

One's eye has a hole in it.

Աչքը կշտանալ չունի:

The eye knows no being full.

Մարդու աչքը ծակ է, բուռ՛ն հողով կը կշտանայ:

One's eye has a hole in it, it gets full (is fulfilled) with a handful of soil (thrown into the grave).

Աչքը ծակ *eye with a hole* is a common phrase (used also as a compound word, աչքածակ hole-eyed) referring to greedy, in a more philosophical sense, to the endlessness of human desires, to the love of life and getting full with a handful of soil refers to the burial rite when each present at the burial throws a handful of soil on the grave.³⁹ There are more metaphors with body parts.

Pr 25:15 [With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and] a soft tongue will break a bone.

Անուշ (քաղցր) լեզուն (խօսքը) օճը բնէն կը հանէ:

A sweet tongue (sweet words) draws a snake out of its den.

Լեզուի տակը ոսկոր չկայ:

There is no bone under the tongue. Or: He has no bone under his tongue

Refers to direct, inconsiderate speaking.

The second proverb uses the image of tongue in opposition with bone, as in the Bible but both the image and the meaning are quite different. The biblical meaning appears in a wider scope in the first proverb which omits the opposition of soft tongue/hard bone. The second proverb uses the image of tongue in opposition with bone, as in the Bible but with a quite different meaning. The power of words above all is more apparent in the next parallel.

Heb 4:12 Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. Cf. also: John 1.14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

Թրի կտրածը կը լաւնայ, լեզուի կտրածը չի լաւնար:

*The sword cut heals, the tongue cut doesn't.*⁴⁰

The power of words is an extensive theme in Armenian proverbs; there are dozens of sayings elaborating on it⁴¹ but only the proverb above like in the Bible passage compares a sword with words and asserts the advantage of words above weapons. The basic difference: the Armenian proverb refers to human speech, and the Bible, to the Lord's words.

Eccl 11:12 [Of making many books there is no end; and] much study is a weariness of flesh.

³⁹ There is a belief that if a person dies without fulfilling a great desire, their eyes do not shut in death, for example, a parent dying before the son returns from faraway places is said to *leave with open eyes*, *աչքը բաց զնաց*. *When eyes are shut, all desires end.*

⁴⁰ There is quite common English saying which forms a false equivalent with this Armenian proverbs: *Sticks and stones will back break my bones, but words can never harm me*. Opposing mentality and parallelism in the used images is obvious with *Pr 25:15 a soft tongue will break a bone*. Another English proverb comes closer with its meaning to the Armenian proverbs: *His bark is worse than his bite*.

⁴¹ E.g.: *Հագուստով կ'ընդունեն, լեզվով ճամփու կը դնեն*: Shown in by clothes, shown out by the speeches. That is, clothes matter at first but a person's final evaluation derives from their speeches.

Գիտուն գիտնայ, քանց մազ կը բարկնայ, անգետ լէ չհասկնայ, քանց գերան կը հաստնայ:

The guru who knows, thins down like a hair and the dumb who doesn't understand, he rounds up like a log.

The emphasis in this parallel is on the consequences of excessive study and knowledge for a human body. More knowledge brings more worries and wears one down. In the Armenian culture reflected naturally in proverbs, thinness matches poverty and unhealthy, malnourished life, while plumpness opposes it as a symbol of wealth and good life. The irony in this proverb relies on that cultural background. The proverb also has another additional undertone not parallel to the Bible passage: it highlights a degree of dumbness necessary to go through life cheerfully which is so full of pain and suffering. Another proverb complements to the parallel above and asserts that extra weight kills. These are human universals.

Ամեն բան բարկնալէն կը կտրի, մարդը՝ հաստնալէն:

Everything gets cut (breaks down) from thinning, and people, from getting fat.

Excessive reading and eating are condemned which does not diminish the timeless value of education in Armenian proverbs. The theme connecting the Bible and the proverb in the following parallel views education as an asset, and an ornament:

Pr 1:8-9 Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching; for they are a fair garland for your head, and pendants for your neck.

Կարդալը ոսկի բիւազուկ է:

Reading (studies) is a golden bracelet.

See *complete equivalency* synonyms on p. 7 and lexical matches, p. 15.

The direction of meaning change in Armenian proverbs compared to Bible in most parallels arrives from removing God or Jesus. Dialogs take place between people and substitute the religious connotations with a worldly wisdom. However, there are numerous proverbs which mention God or the Lord (but not even once *Jesus* though there are some other paremia, like idioms and phrases with *Jesus's* name used). Thematic adages include also Armenian proverbs in regard to sin, devil, clergy, religion, and faith, etc. which require an in-depth study another time. We would like to end the thematic adages with several Armenian proverbs involving God without specific passages from the Bible.⁴²

The largest theme paralleling Armenian proverbs and Bible is God.⁴³ In Armenian proverbs God appears in three basic dimensions: 1. good, 2. cruel and 3. regulator of people's life. Below we present two examples of each, more is given in the appendix.

1. God as good, just, supporting the unfortunate and ignoring the wicked:

Աստուած ազոռալի բերնին 'որ նայէ, Վարդեւորին ձուն կը դնէ:

If God considers what a crow says, it will snow on Vartevor.

Աստո՞ մատաղը կը տեսնի, փետը կը հասցնի:

God sees the sacrifice, he provides the log.

2. God as almighty and unquestionable even if cruel and unreasonable:

Աստուած 'որ կ'ուզէ մէկի'ն տունը քանդէ, նախ խելքը կ'առնի:

If God wants to destroy one's home, first takes away his mind.

⁴² God in Armenian proverbs is a separate topic to be analyzed in a different article.

⁴³ Another obvious theme between the Bible and Armenian proverbs is sin but it is not addressed extensively in the most frequent and popular Armenian proverbs. See some Armenian proverbs on sin in Tapestry, p.28-29. Fault not sin is a common topic in Armenian proverbs, e.g. Փայտը ձեռքդ առնես թէ չէ, գող շունը ծլկելուն կը նայէ: As soon as you pick up the stick, the thieving dog knows his error (and looks for ways to escape). Շան սատկելիքն 'որ գայ, կ'երթայ ժամի դուռը կը կեղտոտէ: *If a dog feels like dying, goes and shits at the church doors.*

Որբը խնդաց, Աստուած ըսաւ՝ հապա ես ուր եմ:
The orphan cheered, God said, Where do you think I am?

3. God as a regulator and mediator of worldly life:

Առաջ Աստուած:

God First.

Աստուած երկու ականջ, մէկ բերան է տուել, որ շատ լսենք, քիչ խօսինք:

God has given two ears and one mouth to listen a lot and talk a little.

6. Opposite Mentality

Parallels with opposing mentality are challenging in the sense that there is a huge number of proverbs which express quite a different mentality compared to the Bible. As mentioned above, the mentality in the Bible is not homogeneous; a large discrepancy can be observed in ideology, attitudes and recommended behaviors in the Old versus New Testament. The main contradiction could be perhaps formulated as 'eye for eye' versus 'love your enemy'. Cf.:

Mt 5:38-39 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other.

The New Testament metaphors are common in Armenian proverbs but ideological correlation is closer with the Old Testament; let's remember:

Աչքդ հանողի հոգին հանէ:

Who pokes out your eye, poke out his soul.

Cf. also:

Կատուն 'որ կատու է, չանչը կը քցէ:

Even the cat that's just a cat will thrust its claws.

The conventional meaning of the proverb is: however weak one be against the enemy, one fights.

On the other hand, the system of Armenian proverbs is not limited to a homogenous mentality either. They are replete with paradoxes and directly contradictory conclusions with the use of the same premises. Cf.:

ճրագն (Լամպը) իրա տակը լուս չի տայ:

A lamp doesn't light up underneath itself.

Conventional meaning: some people are good for others but not for their family or themselves.

ճրագը մէնակ իրա տակը լոյս կու տայ:

A lamp illuminates just under itself.

Conventional meaning: some people are good only toward themselves.

Both proverbs are quite common (they have multiple dialect variations) and both oppose to:

Mt 5:15: Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Considering the ideological heterogeneity of both the Bible and the system of Armenian proverbs and the possibility of endless oppositions, I have selected a small number of proverbs which express a significant opposition to some key biblical concepts. The distinctly opposite mentality and clear contradiction in the ideological realm between the Bible and the Armenian proverbs creates parallels only in case of formal links in wording, images, and formulaic expressions. Continuing from the Sermon on the Mount, we encounter formal similarity and ideological opposition in the following parallels:

Mt 5:40-41 and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well.

Երես տուիր, աստառ կ'ուզէ:

You gave [him] the facing fabric, he's asking for the lining.

Cf. English: Give him an inch and he'll take a mile.

Mt 5:42 Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.

Ընկերոջդ պարտք տուիր, համ փողդ կորցրիր, համ ընկերդ:

You loaned to your friend, you lost both your money and your friend.

There is a large number of Armenian proverbs presenting dire consequences for those who aid and support the needy.⁴⁴ On the other hand, cf.:

Pr 22:9 He that has a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he gives of his bread to the poor.

Խեղճին հաց տուող չի էղնի, հըմը խրատ տուող շատ կ'եղնի:

No one gives bread to the poor but many will offer advice.

One of the main trends in the Bible, expressed in multiple passages and with various metaphors is reaping what has been sown.

Ps 126.5 May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

Դառը դատեց, դատարկ նստաւ:

He worked hard, remained empty (with nothing).

This proverb is very typical for the Armenian cultural mentality; constant attacks of foreign invaders, social injustice and also the harsh weather and the seismological conditions frequently left the toil on land with no results, and its worker, empty-handed or destroyed. Even the direct counterpart to 'you reap what you sow' in its conventional meaning refers to the consequences of negative deeds.

In parallels with equivalency in meaning we used the following:

Pr 25:6-7 Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great; for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of the prince.

Վարը նստիր, որ վերը քեզի տեղ տան:

Sit below so that they give you a place among higher-ups.

Another proverb twists it to the contrary in reference to contemptible arrogance:

Վարը չեմ նստի, վերն էլ տեղ չկայ:

I won't sit below, and above, there is no place for me.

Refers to contemptible arrogance.

Ps 23:5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows.⁴⁵

Բաժակը որ լցուեց, կը թափուի:

When the cup fills up, it will overflow.

Opposite to the euphoric meaning in THE BIBLE, the proverb indicates the end of patience, usually also points to the beginning of action; used also to explain or justify a negative action. The

⁴⁴ E.g. Աղքատ շինէ խեր էրա, ետէն դառի, սէյր էրա: Bump a poor, do goodness, then turn and watch after him. See more on p. 3.

⁴⁵ In KJV, 'my cup runneth over'.

abbreviated version բաժակը լցուել է ‘the cup has filled’ (or overflows) is used with the same meaning and is a lexical match with opposite mentality.⁴⁶

Several lexical matches demonstrate a truly opposite mentality in regard to swearing, for example:

Mt 5: 34-36 But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

In Armenian, common paremiological oaths oppose to the passage above:⁴⁷
Երկինքը վկայ heaven (be) witness (i.e.: I swear this is true and my witness is the Heaven, God)
Աստուած վկայ God (be) witness

գլուխս վկայ My head (be) witness

Երկինք-գետին heaven and land; the last two are quite frozen phrases with no other special meaning save for: *I swear, I am telling the truth*. The use of the phrase may infer irony or sarcasm or contain a hint of doubt the Bible or incredulousness, also with the word վկայ *witness* added at the end (e.g.: Երկինք-գետին ընկաւ, Երդուն-պատռոտուն կերաւ՝ թէ մատնիքից խաբար չէ, assumes the incredibility of the person taking these oaths.

Several ideological adages parallel ‘don’t worry about tomorrow’; among Armenian proverbs the opposite is true too: it may be too late till the tomorrow arrives.

Mt 6:34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.

Although several ideological adages parallel to the optimistic mentality ‘don’t worry about tomorrow’ of the New Testament (see below), pessimism about the future, along with a sad present at hand is more common in Armenian proverbs.

Mt 6:34 "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.

Մինչև բարակ առուն ջուր գայ, գորտի աչքը դուրս կուգայ:

Till the shallow creek fills with water, the frog's eyes will pop out.

Էշ մի սատկի, գարուն կու գայ, յոնջա կ'ուտես:

Donkey, don't die, spring will come and you'll eat grass.

Indirect Parallels

7. Ideological Adages (IA)

Ideological adages (IA) employ images and metaphors not related with the Bible but express ideas and concepts in accordance with the biblical ideology. Thus, IA constitute indirect parallels. These are parallels the furthest distancing Armenian proverbs and the Bible.

There is a subtle line between the thematic and ideological adages. The former are parallels with Armenian proverbs which contain Christian images and/or biblical formulae with conclusions

⁴⁶ In this case, the verb obtains the perfect tense form. It is interesting to notice that in idioms the grammatical form of the verb can completely change the meaning of the phrase. For example, the same phrase in infinitive in a party setting sounds as an appeal to toast. Cf. also, գլուխը կերան *they ate his head* means ‘they killed or destroyed him’, կեանքը կերան *they ate his life* means ‘caused him sufferings’. In both cases the verb is in simple past. The verb *to eat* in subjunctive is used in endearing expressions, such as ուտենք *may I eat you* which only means ‘I love you very much’.

⁴⁷ It is plausible to suppose that these oaths were common in the Old World, including Armenia, therefore Matthew was that specific.

which may be similar or dissimilar with the Bible. In IA parallels, both Bible and Armenian proverbs reach the same conclusions but with different means. For example, the Gospel mentality for 'no worries about tomorrow' in Armenian proverbs appears as 'avert planning; God commands tomorrow', cf.:

Mt 6:30-31, 34 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 'Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day.

Օրը կուգայ, բարին հետը:

The day will come, and the goodness with it.

Աստուծոյ առաջ չընկնինք:

Let us not precede (forerun) God.

Աստուծոյ նատաղը տեսնի, փետը կը հասցնի:

God sees the sacrifice, he provides with the logs.

Ամեն ատուր Աստուծոյ աղքատը կը կշտացնէ:

God feeds the poor every hour.

The IA can be grouped into two distinct categories: 1. Free IA, like the proverbs above which match the Bible ideologically; and 2. Nested IA, which have synonymous proverbs forming parallels in other categories, for example:

The IA can be grouped into two distinct categories: 1. Free IA, as with the proverbs about the future above, and 2. Nested IA, which have synonymous proverbs forming parallels in other categories, for example: we had the following equivalent in meaning:

Having left aside the log in his eye, (s/he) looks for a twig in another's eye.

Իրա աչքի գերանը թողած, ուրիշի աչքի չոփը ման կուգայ:

paralleling to:

Mt 7:3 Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye but do not notice the log in your own eye?

A nested ideological adage is formed with this synonymous proverb:

Դաւէն իր կուզը չի տեսնի, ուրիշի դուզը կը տեսնի:

The camel does not see its crooked hump but notices other's straightness.

The *Mt 7:3* passage and the proverb about the camel offer the same conclusion with different means. The synonymous proverb creates direct *equivalency in meaning* with the same Bible passage and the IA parallel on the camel falls into a 'ready nest'. These *Nested Ideological Adages* and their synonyms are the major means of creating the *tapestry* of endlessly changing proverbial meanings. Here we will focus on *Free Ideological Adages* which have biblical meaning in different wording.

Ezek 18:2`The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'.

Jn 10:18: A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

Ծառի դառնութիւնից պտուղն էլ չի ուտուի:

Because of the bitterness of the tree, its fruit isn't edible either.

The responsibility of children for their parents' actions in Armenian proverbs relates to human character. It assumes children innocent but since parents have negative personalities, it is impossible to love their children; not the fruit but the tree is bitter. The general meaning paralleling Bible and proverbs is a child's negative legacy from parents.

Ezek 18:2`The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'.

Jn 10:18: A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

Because of the bitterness of the tree, its fruit isn't edible either.

The responsibility of children for their parents' actions in the proverb relates to human character. It assumes children innocent but socially unacceptable because of their parents' negative heritage, be that their personalities or deeds; not the fruit but the tree is bitter. The general meaning paralleling Bible and proverbs is a child's negative legacy from parents.

Mt 12:25 Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand".

Գողը որ տունէն ըլլայ, եզը երդիկէն կ'երթայ:

If the thief is from home, the ox will go away from the roof window.

Ps 119:96 I have seen a limit to all perfection.

Առանց փշի վարդ չկայ:

There is no rose without thorns.

Ephes 4:26-27 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

Ելաւ սիրտ, կտրեց գլուխ, իջաւ սիրտ, չգտաւ գլուխ:

Upset was the heart, and cut off the head, calmed down the heart, could not find the head.

The tone in this Bible passage is calm and philosophical. The Armenian proverb employs abrupt and cruel images presenting the consequences of unreserved anger: in emotional distress one may damage or destroy oneself or a loved one, an irreversible error after one has calmed down. Cf. also with:

Pr 25:28 He whose spirit is without restraint is like a city that is broken down and without walls.

Pr 17:5 He who mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

Էնքան ուրիշների վրայ կռռաց, վերջը իրա գլուխը ելաւ (եկաւ):

He cawed at others so much that at length it happened to him/her (came/raised unto his head).

Pr 17:10 the LORD tries hearts.

Փորձը փորձանք չէ:

Trying (attempt) is not trouble.

Փորձը փորձանք դառաւ:

A trial (attempt) turned into trouble.

Eccl 3: 1 To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

Վախտը՝ վախտին, արժան կ'ըլնես փափուկ բախտին:

[If you keep] time to time, you'll deserve a smooth fate.

Ժամանակը որ գայ, քարէ տանձը կը հասուննայ:

If the time comes, the stone pear will ripen.

Jn 10:12: So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Ինչ տաս հոգուդ, էն կ'երթայ արևուդ:

What you give for your soul, goes to your sun (adds up to your life).⁴⁸

Ամեն մարդու արածը իր առջևէն կ'երթայ:

⁴⁸ The *sun* in Armenian is a conventional metaphor for one's life span, cf. *may your sun live*, a blessing, and *I'll bury your sun*, a curse. See metaphors on the *sun*, p.15.

Every man's deeds walk in front of him.

Մի անիր անօրէն, կը գտնես երկնաւորէն:

Don't be lawless (break the laws), you'll get it back (find from) God.

Աստուած աչքերն առաւ, մահանէն ծաղիկն եղաւ:

God took his eyes (eyesight), small pox was deemed the ploy (excuse, pretext).

Pr 1:18-19 But these men lie in wait for their own blood, they set an ambush for their own lives. Such are the ways of all who get gain by violence; it takes away the life of its possessors.

Revelation 13:10, KJV: He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.

Արին թափողը արնով էլ կ'երթայ:

He who pours blood, will go with blood.

Արունը արնով կը լուանան:

Blood is washed by blood.

Pr 17:22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.

Քէֆ անողին քէֆ չի պակսի (սուգ անողին էլ՝ սուգ:)

Ideological adages are multiple and versatile. We will leave it here to conclude our discussion on the parallels between the Armenian proverbs and the Bible.

Conclusions

1. Statistics

From the comparative study above one could safely state that the further the presented parallels depart in form, the larger grows their number; reliable statistical data would require a computerized sifting of the Bible in comparison with all collections of Armenian proverbs. The majority of parallels pertain to the types of *ideological adages*, *equivalents in meaning* and *lexical matches* formed especially with the Old Testament. The next types of parallels by frequency are *complete equivalents*, *thematic adages*, and *equivalents in form* in relation to both the Old and New Testaments. Among these, the majority are *equivalents in meaning*. *Opposite mentality* is mostly observed with the New Testament.

2. Difference Trends

Until now we focused on the similarities found between the Bible and Armenian proverbs. However, the differences are as much important because they demonstrate the intricate interlace of the folk mentality and folkloric common sense with the official religious ideology and literary creations.

Differences between languages are in the focus of modern linguistics, particularly in interdisciplinary studies on culture and language, such as anthropological linguistics, ethnolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, etc. (new branches and subfields spring out continuously, so we need an et cetera). If structural linguistics was mainly concerned with the systematic differences between languages (i.e., divergence between phonetic, morphological and syntactic levels used for structural classification of languages, say, inflectional, agglutinating and isolating types, SOV, SVO, etc. types) and applied linguistics attempted to use these findings in language teaching methodology and language acquisition studies (e.g., contrastive analysis hypothesis). Modern linguistics is more concerned with the structural commonalities as displayed in universal grammar and differences in

meaning and use which bring about the differences in world vision and mentality of speech communities. Thus, dictionary meaning of words in different languages in fact may have quite significant differences in meaning, cf. the meaning of the word cold in Aleutian Eskimo languages and in Hawaiian or other Polynesian tropical languages. These are denotative, extra-linguistic differences conditioned by the environment where different languages developed.

On the level of parallels between the Armenian proverbs and the Bible, the differences emerge from divergent mentality. One of the most interesting trends observable throughout parallels appears in a consistent removal God and religious connotations from the proverbs even when similar imagery and metaphors clearly link a proverb to a specific biblical passage. The natural result of this removal often radically modifies the proverbial conclusion, compare:

Job 22:29 When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; [and he shall save the humble person].⁴⁹

Կեանքը սանդուղք է, կ'իջնես էլ, կ'ելնես էլ:

Life is a staircase; it will go both up and down.

The proverb refers to social status changes, ups and downs of life connected with streaks of good luck, success and failure and trouble.

Gal 6:7 [Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for] Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Pr 17: Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

8: For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

9: And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart.

Ինչ որ ցանես, այն կը հնձես:

Whatever you sow, you reap.

Not only the Armenian proverb is completely void of religious meaning, it clearly designates human responsibility for very earthly actions. Cf. a synonymous proverb:

Լաւ ըսենք, լաւ լսենք:

If we say good things, we'll hear good things in return.

Josh 23:10 'One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fights for you, as he hath promised you.'

Մարդ կայ, հազար արժէ, մարդ կայ, մէկ չարժէ: There is a person who is worth a thousand; there is a person not worth even one.

The vaguer the message, the more room is left for including the listener's own perceptions, experiences and ideas into the message. The proverbs interpret the Armenian cultural reality. The Bible is an interpretation of the word of the Lord as perceived by its writers. It has being interpreted in sermons for centuries. Folks interpret the same interpretations on the basis of their experiences in the condensed forms of proverbs and sayings.

In ample instances, when the parallel directly, practically word by word claims the Bible as a source of origin or influence, the religious meaning of the Bible is substituted with a worldly, common-sensical meaning of folk wisdom. For example:

Mt 6:3-4 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Մի ձեռքը չգիտի թէ միւսն ինչ է անում:

One hand doesn't know what the other does.

Կնկայ մէկ ձեռքը պիտի չիմանայ թէ միւս ձեռն ինչ կ'էնէ:

⁴⁹ The parallel is clearly observable with the KJV. In the SRV, the same passage is as follows: For God abases the proud, but he saves the lowly.

A woman's hand shouldn't know what the other hand does.

The first proverb refers to a confused, disorganized person, and the second, to a savvy and frugal wife who can save for tomorrow.

The removal of God modifies Biblical dialogues in proverbs to fit it to a common dialogue between equals as human:

Job 6:11-13 What is my strength, that I should wait? And what is my end, that I should be patient? Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh bronze? In truth I have no help in me, and any resource is driven from me.

Քարէ ջա՞ն եմ:

Is my flesh of stone?

The conventional meaning in this parallel matches the biblical sense but lacks the tragic connotations of Job's story. Like in Job's story, the phrase refers to the need of patience and the lack of support or hope. However, the rhetorical question in Armenian addresses an equal human being, not God and compares one's burdens and bearings with that of their interlocutor with a hint of competition—my lot is worse than yours; it may also carry irony and mocking. Several other common phrases in Armenian match 'biblical stones'; see lexical matches

Mt 5:14-15 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Ծրագն (Լամպը) իրա տակը լուս չի տայ:

A lamp lights up underneath itself.

Ծրագը մենակ իրա տակը լոյս կու տայ:

A lamp illuminates just under itself.

Opposing conclusions derived from the same image refer to a person unable to take care of himself and/or his family, and in the second proverb, to selfishness.

Deut 8:3 And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that **man does not live by bread alone**, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

Ոչ միայն հացիւ (այլեւ բանիւ) (Eghishe)

Not by bread alone (but also with word).

The Armenian proverb has an emphasis on non-material values. The latter of course include but are not limited to religious values. This proverb has been a slogan in ancient Armenian literature. The presence of God is gone; men are against men in an unequal fight for maintaining identity as Armenian or giving up and assimilating with the invader. It is a slogan calling to sacrifice the physical life in order to maintain identity; it has inspired the centuries long struggle of Armenians for independence.

Another difference trend observable throughout parallels is the removal of heavenly reward and redemption and their substitution with earthly justice. The best illustration to this trend are proverbs evolving around doing goodness and casting it into the water (see p. 3-4). Cf, also:

Սևն ու սպիտակը ջուրը անց կենալու կ'երևայ:

The black and white appear when passing through water.

Տաշած քարը գետին չի մնայ:

A polished stone won't stay on the ground.

Additionally and on the contrary, spiritual-religious righteousness contributes to a better and longer *earthly* life.

Ինչ տաս հոգուդ, էն կ'երթայ արևուդ:

What you give for your soul, goes to your sun (adds up to your life).

And lastly, as we have seen in the discussion above, culturally more familiar items and phenomena substitute for biblical images or formulae in Armenian proverbs; I will repeat just a few of the mentioned parallels:

Ecc 7:4-5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of the fools.

Լաւ է իմաստունի հետ քար քաշես, քան անխելքի հետ փլաւ ուտես:

Better is to carry stones with wise than to eat pilaf with fools.

Jer 13:23 Can Ethiopians change their skin or leopards their spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil.

Սևին սապօննն ինչ օգուտ (կ'ընէ), խևին խրատը:

What good is soap to the black and advice to insane?

Կարմիր կովը կաշին չի փոխէ:

The red cow doesn't change its skin.

Pr 17:10 A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.

Գիտունին մէկ, անգէտին՝ հազար:

Once to the wise, a thousand times, to the fool.

Nested Ideological Adage: Մինարի գլխին հազար բեռ կակալ լցնես, մէկը վրէն չի մնայ:

If you put a thousand loads of walnuts on the minaret, none will stay there.

With the same opposition of *one versus thousand*, these proverbs reach a similar conclusion, though instead of a particular human vice, that is, foolishness, the emphasis here brings an additional hue, the uselessness of irrational actions.

3. Origins and Historical Circumstances for Parallels

1. Some parallels seem to unequivocally point at the Bible as the source of origin for the paralleling Armenian proverbs:

*Job 6:27 Ye dig a pit for your friend.*⁵⁰

Ուրիշի համար փոս փորողը ինքը մէջը կ'իյնայ:

Who digs a pit for another, will fall into it.⁵¹

2. Yet other parallels seem to indicate the Bible as a major source of influence.

Դուշմանիս չեն կամենայ: *May it not happen even to my enemy.*

To consider the Biblical scripture as the source of multiple parallels observed with Armenian proverbs, we have to note that the religious and intellectual influence of the Bible emerges in the Armenian reality not sooner than in the 4-5th centuries of our era whereas the Indo-European linguistic evidence places Armenians in Asia Minor not later than the 12th c. BC.⁵² This geo-historical environment allows to assume that the Armenian proverbs and the biblical images may have other, yet **older** folklore sources. For instance, historically the first legal notion that for every wrongdoing there should be a compensating measure of justice comes from the Code of Hammurabi, the king of Babylon (1792-1750 BC). *An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*, is attested in Akkadian, and appears much later in the Bible, and, in the fifth c., also in Grabar as : Ակն ընդ ական, ատամն ընդ ատամն: We do not know for how long this proverb has been in use among Armenians before it was written down with the beginning of the written era.

⁵⁰ From KJV. In RSV: You would even cast lots over the fatherless, and bargain over your friend.

⁵¹ Still, the experience may have originated in the prehistoric hunter-gatherer society.

⁵² Some linguists view Armenian Highland as the historical homeland of Indo-Europeans which places Armenians in the geocultural environment around fifth millennium BC (see, for example, Gamkrelidze and Ivanov. 1984. *The Indo-European Language and the Indo-Europeans*, Moscow.

Matthew 5:38. 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'. The question is whether the saying is novelty for Armenians coming into use with the translation of the Bible, or already a commonly used saying, becoming attested in writing.

Again from the Code of Hammurabi derives *Physician, heal thyself*, attested in Luke 4:23 and paralleling with an *equivalent in meaning*: Դեղ ունիս, քո գլխին արա. Has this been a adage wandering through the ancient civilizations and acquiring an appropriate proverbial form in different languages or has it appeared in the Armenian reality through the literary influence of the Bible and later taken upon its modern vernacular form—this is a question that cannot be answered unless new attestations, if any, in ancient literature are revealed. Proverbs travel by the word of mouth and, along with other genres of folklore constitute a specific characteristic of verbal art, which become accepted, acculturated, and localized throughout the world. Synonymic proverbs with the same meaning and very similar form are registered in the folklore of many Christian and not Christian nations. These international proverbs obtain native cultural hues in the process of acculturation. The closer geographically to Armenia are proverbs from other languages, the more similar is the imagery in synonyms. For these Armenian proverbs, the parallelism with the Bible hardly indicates a direct source although the Bible still might have been a source of influence intensifying the use of the proverb and supporting its frequency. In examples below I have specially chosen parallel proverbs from traditionally Muslim or Buddhist nations:

Pr 25:28: IA

Էլաւ սիրտ, կտրեց գլուխ, իջաւ սիրտ, չգտաւ գլուխ:

Upset was the heart, and cut off the head; calmed down the heart, couldn't find the head.

Anger has no eyes. Malayalam

Mt 10:42 42: IA

Ինչ տաս հոգուդ, էն կ'երթայ արևուդ:

What you give for you soul, will go to your life (longevity).

Ten in this world, one hundred in the next, i.e. whatever is given in alms in this world is repaid tenfold in the next. Persian

Ps 2:1-4 ...And the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His anointed, saying, "Let us (F)tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!" He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord (H)scoffs at them.

Thematic Adages and IA

Շուները հաչայ, քամին փչէ:

May the dog bark, and the wind blow.

If the dog bark at the moon, will the moon be affected by it? Tamul

Աստուած ազճաւի բերնին (ղառղղի)որ նայէ, Վարդեւորին ձուն կը դնէ:

If God considers what a crow says, it will snow on Vartevor.

If a jackal howls, will my old buffalo die? Badaga

Արեգակին հէտք է հեռուից նայել, կ'այրի եթէ շատ մօտեմաս:

Watch the sun from far away, or else it will burn you.

If you stare at the sun, it will hurt your eyes and not the sun. (re: God) Persian

2 Cor 12:7 ...A thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated.

Thematic Adages, IA: Մատից փուշ հանող'մ չունի:

Has no one to pull out a thorn from his finger.

Cf.: However small the thorn in your foot, pull it of, then go on. *Persian*

Pr 25:15 [With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and] a soft tongue will break a bone.

Անուշ (քաղցր) լեզու (խօսքը) օձը բնէն կը հանէ:
A sweet tongue (sweet words) draws a snake out of its den.
A pleasant voice brings a snake out of a hole. Persian

Mt 7:16. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?
12:33 The tree is known by his fruit.

Շնէն շուկ (ու կէս) կ'եղնի:
From a dog another dog and a half will be. ???

Քազ'ն չեղնի, մազ'ն կ'եղնի:
If there isn't a gaz⁵³, there will be a hair.

Will an elephant bring forth a frog or a pig a mouse? Malayalam

Ideological adage: Ps 119:96 have seen a limit to all perfection; Your commandment is exceedingly broad.

Առանց փշի վարդ չկայ:
There is no rose without thorns.

An international proverb widely used in Europe and Asia, compare: **There is no honey without a sting, nor a rose without a thorn. Persian**

The list of these wandering sayings and proverbs is quite large; they indicate that the geo-cultural region should be considered a more important circumstance in the expansion of proverbs. The Bible itself originates from the same sphere of geo-cultural influences.

The last and the most important in my view circumstance to be considered in understanding the origins of parallels between the Bible and Armenian proverbs concerns all proverbs in all human languages. Proverbs originate from *universal* human needs and values, experiences, and practices. The basic human needs for food, water, shelter, *and* love have given rise to proverbial wisdom throughout the world, notwithstanding historical and cultural differences. Compare, for instance the salt metaphors as universal seasoning.

Անհամ, անհոտ, անժուր կորկոտ:
Tasteless, scentless, oilless millet.

A friendless person is like a meal without salt. **Chinese.**

Here are just two more Armenian proverbs on food, shelter, and intimate relations as basic needs:

Որտեղ հաց, էնտեղ կաց:
Stay where you find your food.

Խորոզի'ն չափ մարդ ունենաս, կալի'ն չափ տեղ ունենաս:
Have a spouse about the size of a cock and your own place about the size of a barn.

Thus, for the pre-historical Armenian culture, the parallelism between Armenian proverbs and the Bible may have yet older heritage than the Bible. For both pre-historical and historical times, wandering proverbs (folklore) and universal human values must have contributed more to the parallels, than the direct influence of the Bible.

To regard the Bible as the source of parallels for the historical period after the fourth c., we have to consider the levels of literacy and familiarity with the Bible for common folks, the creators and users of proverbs, sayings, and other paremia. Low levels of literacy until the 20th century impeded the deep knowledge of the biblical texts on a first hand basis for people although Armenia accepted Christianity as State Religion early on in the fourth century AD. The creation of the Armenian Alphabet circa 405 AD was aimed at the translation and popularization of the Bible which was preached in Greek and Aramaic. Mostly anonymous translators created a practically perfect Armenian

⁵³ Gaz is an outdated measurement unit for length, common in folklore.

version of the Bible through a comparative translation from Hebrew and Greek. This critical team work made the Biblical Word accessible for many generations of church goers who could take the Word with them and use in everyday life in the form of sayings. The power of the Word taught from the pulpit—the only mass media of the time—has been absorbed, reinterpreted and acculturated in Armenian proverbs to fit the common sense of everyday existence.

The situation changes around 10-12cc. when Grabar becomes practically incomprehensible. The Bible was not translated into the new vernaculars until the late 19th c. a protestant enterprise still not completely acceptable for the majority of Lusavorchakan Armenians. Beginning from the era of Middle Armenian (12-18th cc.), the language further impeded a first hand understanding of the Biblical texts. The official language of the Armenian Church remained the literary Ancient Armenian—Grabar. The service until now is performed in it except for the sermon which lately is being offered in modern Armenian. Elementary education was available in parochial schools adjacent to churches and practiced memorization of the books of the Bible without the least concern of understanding it; local parochial priests were not experts in Grabar either. Thus, beginning from Middle Armenian up to our times, the comprehensibility and accessibility of the Biblical word went downward. In the 20th century Diaspora, religion remained part of the official school curriculum, however the emphasis was rather on its connection to national identity, than religion per se. In many countries with Armenian communities, the maintenance of modern Armenian as a language of everyday communication became threatened, and the study of Grabar and the comprehension of the Biblical texts was limited to very few professionals.

In the Soviet era, public education became free and mandatory, and common literacy achieved its highest levels in Armenia. However, a new gap formed between the people and the Bible because national identity was undermined, religion banned and the church and clergy persecuted quite harshly especially until World War Two. The enforced atheism was unable to eradicate faith but for the majority of believers it was faith without religion or church and the Bible. Owning or reading the Bible, and especially spreading its word were persecuted by the law until the Independence in 1991.⁵⁴

Taking into account these historical circumstances and the fact of common ancient sources for both the Bible and proverbs, it would be safe to assume that the Bible *may be* the direct source of at least some of the *complete equivalency* parallels and the Bible *may* have affected the common use of the other types of parallels.

On the other hand, obviously it is not easy, if not impossible to reach a clear point of origin for our complex tapestry of ages old messages delivered in different languages and different forms, especially in consideration with the wandering nature of proverbs in general and the reflection of not only cultural but also universal human values in proverbs. All of the above have contributed to the parallelism between Armenian proverbs and the Bible with the following big picture in brief:

- a multitude of synonymous and antonymous Armenian proverbs, which match a large variety of passages in the Bible;
- an intricate interlace of verbal folk art with the biblical word and images;
- an obvious removal of some purely religious connotations;
- a substitution of foreign for Armenians ideas, realias, and concepts with culturally relevant ones.

⁵⁴ During WWII, the Armenian Church organized support for the Red Army which in retrospect helped to recover its public position somewhat. After the Stalin era, the breath of more liberal times enables the Church to start regular services and recover some holidays and ceremonies, especially baptism. However, with the official language remaining Ancient Armenian and church goers, a meager minority of the population did not bring a significant change in comprehensibility. Also, in order for the Biblical word to turn into folk proverbs and sayings time and continuity are necessary and the recent historical changes, namely—high levels of literacy and somewhat liberal policies toward religion after WWII, took place practically in the contemporary era.

These sources of origin do not exclude each other: proverbial images and conclusions may arise from human universals and travel through many languages of the Old and New Worlds, find their place in the Bible and affect the frequency of proverb use in Armenian. Lastly, we should not exclude the chance of coincidence, for what is human is not foreign to proverbs.

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